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NARRATOR Margaret Jensen ~~Henry Camargo~~

INTERVIEWER ~~Phyllis Lotz~~

PLACE ~~Museum Library~~

DATE June 23, 1982

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Interview with Henry Camargo & Margaret C. Jensen
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Date of Interview: 23 June 1982, Hist. Museum

PL: Introduction.

Can you tell me something about your grandparents?

Mr. C: As far as I know about my grandparents, I knew my grandmother was part Indian and my grandfather came from Sonora, Mexico but that is as much as I know about him. My grandmother was burned when she was out sweeping the patio, her skirt caught on fire from a small fire burning there and she died of her injuries. My cousin Willie Shoemaker was there and he saw it all, I had not been born yet. He told me about it. In those days the ladies wore long skirts and as she swirled her skirt around it caught fire, but my grandfather, I knew him. He lived to be 102 and I have always said that I would outlive him. His name was Antonio Camargo.

PL: What did he do for a living?

Mr. C: He was one of these fellows that traded horses, a trader. He would trade, he even would trade his ranch, going here and there. He did farm a little bit. When I knew him I was only 4 or 5 years old, I would walk with him. We lived at the east end of the reservation where the Chinese had lived. I remember a big building with a high false front as we would walk by. At one time we were sitting on the porch and he wanted me to tie his shoe and he got agitated with me because I could not tie

his shoe, he had a cane and hit me on the head. My mother told him to stop as I could not even tie my own shoes. He was a nice old gent, and he was good to my mother.

Mrs. J: I used to sit on his lap and he would tell me stories. I was one of his favorite grandchildren, both Henry and me. He came and stayed with us. I don't remember him staying with any other sons. He did stay with Uncle Marcello, and from there he went to the hospital where he died.

PL: How many children did he have?

Mrs. J: I have a list of them but it is such a huge list that I have never counted them. The priests from Santa Barbara wrote me a letter and said there was a list to use to name my own children but by that time we had our children. They did not realize the long list when I went to look for my Dad's baptismal papers, they said it was impossible to have anyone living to be that old, he died in 1925, at 101 or 102. Henry has the bible and it says 102. It was written up in the Santa Barbara paper. His sister was still living and she was 98. We finally found our Dad's baptismal paper in Arroyo Grande, and he had been baptized at Mission La Purisima. The records at La Purisima had been destroyed but we found these on my father at Arroyo Grande.

PL: It is interesting that your father was baptized at Purisima.

Mrs. J: At that time, as Henry said, my grandfather loved to squat, in different places in California. He would squat and start a ranch, then trade it and go on. He had been up at Nojoqui, and then to Los Alamos. Thats why Dad was baptized at La Purisima. He would build an adobe house, in fact there is an adobe on Highway 101 that he built. It belonged to Geraldo de la Cuesta. Grandfather was 80 years old at the time. At one time Vince Evans bought that adobe and then sold it. It is called Sierro Alto. Both grandfathers, one on my mothers side built all the woodwork on the adobe. King Merrill has an article on Grandfather Camargo, he wrote it in the valley magazine some years ago. All grandfather used was a string to line up the adobe bricks, and Grandfather Smith did the framing. They also did the building on the adobe where King Merrill lives now on Alamo Pintado Road, Solvang.

Mr. C: That was where I was born, in 1913, on the Alamo Pintado Ranch.

Mrs. J: I was born on the Cyril Lamb Ranch, Los Alamos, on the top of the hill near Refugio Road. Mr Lamb owned that whole area and Nonie Gauld now owns it, the house is still there.

Mr. C: I know that the Boyds owned the Alamo Pintado, my Dad worked for Mr. Boyd, and he also worked for Mr. Lamb.

PL: What was raised on the Lamb Ranch?

Mr. C: They farmed, and the Boyds had the olive orchard. He

raised stock also. In those days they did not have tractors, everything was done by horses, and my Dad was the best teamster in the valley. He could handle 8, 10 horses at a time. I talked with a fellow here a little while ago, and I asked this man about the jerk-lines and he said "I do remember your Dad driving with the jerk-lines." Dad would go to the depot in Los Olivos and all he had was the one line with all those horses.

A jerk-line operates this way... one rein to the two lead horses, who lead the rest of the horses and all Dad did was to jerk on one rein to go where he wanted and call out Hee, or Haw to the leaders up front. The two horses in front were called leaders and the two by the wagon were heelers.

Mrs. J: Explain to Phyllis that Dad always broke his horses just they way he wanted them trained. Dad trained the horses himself. He was a short man but he would go to Fiesta in Santa Barbara when he was elderly, they would get him to ride in a coach, but in the early days, how he got the collars on those horses, I don't know as he was so short. He had a command with these horses and he never beat an animal. Margaret would go plowing with him and he would pick up a little can full of stones and throw one at a horses, a little tap just to remind that horse what to do.

PL: How did your parents meet?

Mr. C: They were both from the valley. My father was James, or

Jimmie Camargo and Mother was Grace Lydia Smith.

Mrs.J: Grandpa Smith was born in England, came here from Maine and was one of the first settlers in the Santa Ynez Valley. He helped build the first grammar school they had here. He helped build a lot of the first buildings in town. The Buells and my Uncle Will had a joke about Grandpa Smith being more of an Englishman than their mother Emily Budd Buell. My grandfather Smith was not the Frank Smith who came in here with Mr. Charles Gardner in the beginning of Santa Ynez. It was Frank Smith who had a peg leg, but they called my grandfather, "Peg Leg." Grandfather was Henry Sydney Smith, and my brother is named for him.

PL: Why did he come to the Santa Ynez Valley?

Mrs. J: He was a carpenter. He left home because all his brothers were ministers and he did not want to be a minister. He just kept moving west, he liked this valley, so he stayed.

PL: How many children in the Smith Family?

Mrs. J: Four girls and two boys. Margaret, Grace, my mother, Dolly, Mary, Albert, William. One girl married a Valencia,

that was Aunt Mattie, and Aunt Dolly married a de la Guerra, Mother married a Camargo, Aunt Mary married a Guevarra.

PL: How many children in your parents family?

Mr. C: Henry and Margaret. I remember when we were going to

school, we lived on the Doheny Ranch, now the S.Y.V. Airport, I started to school first and had to walk, way down by the river, a long way, and I would get a headache, so they would let me go home. Sometimes I was so sick, I would up-chuck and lay there and go to sleep, so Mother and Margaret would go looking for me and pick me up. Later in years when Margaret started school my parents gave us a pony and we rode to school. We would put it in the barn or stake him out to graze until school was out. It was College School, the one that was knocked down. I remember telling Margaret not to speak out in class but she did and the teacher put a dunce cap on her head and put her in the corner. I cried so I had to go outside, Margaret could have cared less. I was only one grade ahead of my sister so we were in the same room. Later on she got ahead of me. We did enjoy ourselves, the two of us on the ranch. I remember one time my Dad had a calf out in the pasture, and we were to feed it. Margaret came out and said, "Lets ride the calf," I didn't want to but we did and it bucked through the fence so what to do, we had to get that calf back but Dad found out. My Dad was very strict about lying but he did not spank us. He expected us to have good manners. When I was courting my first wife, I went to eat with her family, and the old Dane told me I have good manners. I also remember getting a ruler across my hand from Mrs. Muriel Edwards and Dad found out. In

those times there weren't too many people around so if you did something wrong everyone heard about it.

PL: Do you remember any other people from school days that are still living in the valley?

Mr. C: Clyde Knight, Charlie Ochoa, Joe Miranda, Isabelle Kahn, Bill Murphy, Helen, Margaret, Genevive, and Lillian Murphy at grammar school, also Buster Buell and Clara Mae McDonald. Mrs. Hunt taught school there. Miss Lyons was a substitute teacher. Mrs. Walter Buell, Mrs Eileen de la Cuesta was my first grade teacher. I remember they used to board at Mrs. Gardner's place and we lived at Mrs. Quinn's, she had a couple of cows and sold milk to Mrs. Gardner. Mrs. Quinn got me to deliver the milk every day at $1.50 a month.

PL: Did that dollar and half seem like a fortune?

Mr. C: Oh, my gosh! I thought that was lots of money.

Mrs. J: That's like Joe Brown, where the grocery store is now, he had a soda fountain, it was the only one on the coast and people would stop there, these long black cars. I would pick wild flowers after getting up real early in the morning and bring the flowers to Joe Brown, to see if he would give me a nickel for flowers. He was not one to part with his money, but he did for me. I think I was the only child he did give money to, he would give me a nickel and would put the little bouquets at all the tables, and he would say, "You know Margaret, it is easy to make money, but the problem is to hang on to it." He

surely hung on to his money.

PL: Were you both born at born at home or in hospital?

Mr. C: We were born at home, the doctor came here. Dr. Luton came to deliver Margaret, and Dr. Lewis came for me. I never did find my birth certificate. Ma used to say that those doctors delivered us.

Mrs. J: There was a bunch of houses over on the next street, I think Edison and Numancia, Santa Ynez. They all burned one by one. On what is now Highway 246, there were a lot of houses there before it became a highway. The candy maker lived there. He was an old Spaniard and his profession in Spain was making candy. Once in a while he would call Henry and I over to his house to give us some candy. He made preserved citrus fruit and would hang it up in lard buckets in the ceiling. Those ceiling were full of cobwebs, then he would give us a piece and ask us to eat it, but we would tell him no, we would take it home. We knew better than to eat it, but he was so nice to us. One day he said you come over and I will show you how I make the candy, as I had asked him before how he made it, and I asked my mother if I should eat it, and she said, "That's what you get for being nosey!" He did give me some and I took it to Henry, it was beautiful looking stuff.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

PL: Tell me about those houses down there?

Mrs. J: The man who owned all those houses was the same man we were talking about, the candy maker. And at one time before he came, there was a livery stable there belonging to Robles, and before that, the Valencias had it and a two story house next door. The candy maker collected the rents and when he died Joe Caldaron, his nephew had quite a bit of trouble getting the estate straightened out. The old man left part of the estate to people in Spain, he was an old bachelor and I never heard how it turned out. Old Mr. Sanchez would be the only one who would know about that. But there were many little houses there. There is always a section of town where the better houses are and my Dad would say that from Edison down was where the Chinese had their laundry, there were also some gardners living on the east end of the reservation who raised vegetables and sold through the town. Yes, they probably were from the gang that built the narrow gauge railroad. There was always water there and the plants grew well. Miss. Strahan and Mr. Edsell had a furniture store and then she had it by herself but I don't remember any Chinese or Japanese having stores. Miss Strahan's father was a partner with Jess Edsell and she married Mr. Jones, not the garage Jones, Martin Jones.

PL: Lets talk about your older years, did you go to high school, have special friends?

Mr. C: Yes, the Andrews and Edlebuts, they are gone now. The Grands and Joe Miranda and we were great at playing marbles. Whoever won, got to keep the marbles. Two or three of us would go to the reservation to play. There were only a few shacks on the reservation. When the water was up, the steelhead would come up the river and up into Zanja de Coata Creek. Joe had a good ear, and he would say, "I hear one coming!" because you could hear the fish go plop, plop and we would run down there and catch them with our hands. Joe had a brother named Willie who was much older. He was spokesman for the Indians. He went through high school and every one liked Willie Miranda until he got to drinking and then he became just like the rest of them. No ambition. He was a great musician, he played violin, guitar, mandolin, for all the dances over here. When I went to Craig's Pavilion, I loved to dance, and I still do. I learned to dance there. They used to hold dances at Minetti's Hall too. My parents would come and fix us up with a bed on a chair or we would stay in the buggy where we were nice a warm.

Mrs. J: They used to have all the carnivals and plays at that building, it was a gathering place. Some of my closest friends growing up, were the Torrence girls; Mary Alice and Audrey. Clara Mae McDonald Buell was another friend.

We went from high school to business college and then to Ventura Jr. College. Each one of us got married and we were never close again but we are still friends.

PL: How did you meet Mr. Jensen?

Mrs. J: He is from Ballard, I had been married before and then after the war, it was just one of those things (divorce) I knew Carl's two sisters. Mildred Jones was in my class all through high school and Bill Murphy and I started school together, Bill Andrews too. Lawrence Hourahan went through high school with me.

PL: How did you meet your wife Mr. Camargo?

Mr. C: I was going high school, and Margaret would tell me about all the girls. I would come home for lunch and there is a crossing at the creek there and the girls would all run down there as I came back to school, but I did not think about girls, I wanted to play baseball. There was a basketball game in Los Olivos and we went, some guys and me. I had my Dad's car. This fellow asked if I would take a couple of girls home after the game and that's how I met my wife. Hazel Fredricksen. We went together seven years. We had two boys and a girl. I lost one boy in a mishap here, he had three children. He was an electrician and was working for Lewis Minot, putting in a bulb when he slipped and fell and died. Hazel and I were married for 36 years, then she had open heart surgery and did not survive. PL:

PL: How did you get the nick name, Happy?

Mr. C: First, Jack Anderson who knew my Dad and Ma, who practically raised Jack and Jimmie, telling about my mother. Jack was always calling me Jimmie, after my Dad. At that time there was a cartoon in the papers about Jimmie, then there was another funny paper character name Happy Houligan, they left out the Houligan, but started calling me Happy or Hap, even at work. Jimmy Figzgerald always called me Hap. We were very good friends and went fishing and played ball.

PL: Did you go on to Business College, Mrs. Jensen?

Mrs. J: I worked my way through business college for two years in Ventura. I worked for the Dean of Women. Those were the days of the WPA, the Depression. Funds were available for students.They gave me work at school correcting Spanish papers. My major was English and minor was languages. Spanish and Latin. Languages were easy for me so I worked at college for my room and board. We had no money at home and it was a struggle. I worked for a year for Dr. Hanze and saved my money, I cooked in the home for him. The my mother became ill and I had to come back home. My parents had moved to the house on Manzana, where I live now. My Dad bought the place from the William Andersons.

Mr. C: Dad would bring the barley from the ranch to Anderson's mill to grind the grain, so they knew each other. Dad worked for Doheny then. I would come in with my Dad. Mr. Anderson was a funny old man, a Scotsman. I spent a

lot of time watching Mr. Anderson at the forge, and Jim Anderson, his brother. I would bring Jim his mail and he gave me a nickel.

Mrs. J: We should tell Phyllis about Lawrence Marre. He had a store up here. He was an Italian. Mrs. Minetti was a Marre, she and her husband owned the hotel and dance hall on Sagunto Street. Marre was her brother and owned this store. He was the town character. He had a big building, next to the post office, that burned down. At the time, I recall he just lived there and he made wine during prohibition and the law officers would come and break the barrels. I remember one time they broke the wine barrels right in the dirt street and it was running down the street, all green. The wine had not fermented yet so it was still green. Mr. Marre would get upset and take off for Los Angeles. He came back with all kinds of knick-knacks, celluloid toys that would float and he would hang them all up and down the street in front of his store, all his merchandise was out front. I went to town one day and saw this pair of shoes for 50 cents. I told Ma about this, as I went bare footed, that I could buy a pair of shoes for 50 cents at Laurence Marre's store, and some how she found the money and I bought the shoes. I was so proud. Took care of them but with the first rain I walked out and the soles of the shoes disintegrated, they had been made of cardboard. Some of the Marre Family had a hotel at

Avila, near San Luis Obispo. My Dad had an old car, and Mr. Minnetti wanted to go to Avila to a funeral so he asked if I could drive some of the family up there. we stayed all night, there was lots of family. I used to drive folks all over and I was only 14. I got my license when I was 14. One day my mother asked to go to Santa Barbara to see her mother and on the way back we were stopped at one of those check stations. Where they check your brakes and lights. I had told Ma that the brakes were not good before we started and we did get caught. We knew some one at court and it was explained and when I told them I had gotten the brakes fixed the judge said alright, no fine.

PL: Mrs. Jensen, did you do more with your language skills?

Mrs. J: In a way, during the depression there was no work but I did help in a home, cooking and did a lot of tutoring with students at the high school. Mr. Hamm tried to get me to work there but I did not have enough credits to be salaried at school. I did have some students. When I was younger I took children out and taught them horse back riding and gave Spanish lessons in the summers. The Hunts girls were going to Mexico, so I was invited in to teach them Spanish and they would have me stay to dinner. I learned Spanish in the home. My mother's mother was Mexican and only spoke Spanish. Grandmother was a Comparo, and her mother was an Ortega

from the original Ortega Family of Santa Barbara. Aunt Ida's obituary has all the family connection with the Ortegas. In my school years Mother got sick and I came home to take care of her. She worked so hard, did laundry and we did not have piped in hot water, I would get the wood to heat the water. Ma and I did all the hand washing for the J. J. Mitchells when they came here in the 1920's, all those big heavy bath towels, and everything was linen.

PL: I'm sorry to cut this off here, but the tape has run out. Thank you both, Mr. Camargo and Mrs. Jensen for this interview.